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ELECTION OF SPEAKER.

REMARKS

OF

HON. S. CARUTHERS, OF MISSOURI.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, JANUARY 9, 1856,

On the election of Speaker and the organization of the House of Representatives.

Mr. CARUTHERS said:

Mr. CLARK: I do not desire to address the House at any length. All the points to which I would like to attract general attention could not be fairly set forth under the ten-minute rule. I have sought the floor now for the purpose simply of explaining why I have not and cannot act with my colleague, [Mr. KETCHUM,] who has so kindly made allusion to my position. To explain why I have acted as I have in voting for the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. RICHARDSON] would require, I repeat, longer than the time allotted to each member under the order of the House. I shall seek some other opportunity to set myself fairly and fully before the House—I will not say, in fashionable phrase, and before the country, for perhaps the country would take no note of what I do—but before the House and the people of my district.

I desire to state at this time, and in the present connection, in order that what I may remark may go out with the observations of my colleague and friend—and I am proud to call him such—the reasons why I have not, do not, and never will, vote for the distinguished gentleman from Pennsylvania, [Mr. HENRY M. FILLMORE.] I could not vote for Mr. FILLMORE—and I believe that we are allowed to call members by their proper names before the organization—because, while a member of the last Congress, I knew, and now remember, that throughout the Kansas-Nebraska fight, in every stage of that trying contest, his predecessor, the Hon. Hendrick B. Wright, stood fast by us—was one of us; and sir, before I had cast a vote I found that the distinguished gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. FILLMORE] had come here as his successor from a Democratic district, and because of his triumph over Mr. Wright in consequence of his vote on the Kansas-Nebraska bill at the last session. I could not vote for him, then, on the first vote. When the first

vote was taking, I watched its progress, because many of the gentlemen with whom I was previously associated were disposed to vote for Mr. FULLER. In that very first vote, when we were casting our votes for the purpose of making up a record, and when he had the entire House from which to select, I saw that gentleman throw his suffrage for Mr. PENNINGTON, of New Jersey. I remembered then, that at the last Congress Mr. PENNINGTON had voted to suspend the rules, with a view of affording Mr. Elliot, of Massachusetts, an opportunity to introduce a bill to repeal the fugitive slave law.

When Mr. FULLER could take a northern or a southern man—when he could select a conservative man for whom to cast his vote—I saw him vote for a man who had been in favor of allowing the privilege to introduce a bill to repeal the fugitive slave law. I could not vote for him. Mr. PENNINGTON, on that vote, voted for Mr. CAMPBELL, of Ohio, a gentl man, by-the-by, for whom I entertain, as he knows, the most profound respect personally, but whom I regard as the embodiment of northern sentiment on the slavery question. Another vote was had. Mr. FULLER voted for Mr. PENNINGTON; and Mr. PENNINGTON, on the third vote, voted for Mr. BANKS, of Massachusetts, who is not only the embodiment of Free-Soil Democracy, but, it seems, also of northern Americanism and of ultra northern Republicanism. Mr. PENNINGTON voted for Mr. BANKS upon that ballot, and Mr. FULLER voted for Mr. PENNINGTON after he had voted for Mr. BANKS, and for sixteen times. I sat in my seat and saw Mr. FULLER, after Mr. PENNINGTON had voted for Mr. CAMPBELL and Mr. BANKS, cast his vote sixteen times for Mr. PENNINGTON. Could I, sir, as true to the principles of the Nebraska bill, upon which I was elected—as true to the State to which I owe allegiance—as true to the constituents who sent me here upon the Nebraska issue—*could* I vote for a man with such a record as that?

But it is said that Mr. FULLER has made declarations here that entitled him to all respect, and to southern votes. Sir, Mr. FULLER did make declarations here, and in the course of those eloquent declarations he announced some doctrines in which I heartily concur; and when I state that I return to him for the announcement of those doctrines my sincere thanks, I do not do it in any idle spirit of compliment; I do it because I appreciate the high motives of the distinguished gentleman; and I return him those thanks in the same good faith in which I assail those things in his course of which I disapprove. Well, sir, Mr. FULLER, in the course of the explanations which he thought proper to make, was asked by Mr. SWAN, of New York, whether, if it were possible that that part of the Kansas-Nebraska bill which repealed the Missouri compromise should be itself repealed, he would be in favor of it? I do not pretend to give the precise language in which the question was couched, for I have been called into this discussion unexpectedly, but I give the substance of it. What was his reply to that question? I call upon southern gentlemen—and, as I have been thus incidentally arraigned by one of my colleagues, I call upon him—to notice what that answer was. Was it that he stands upon the same principle that we do? Was it that he believed that the principle of non-intervention, as established by the Nebraska-Kansas bill, was true and just? Was that the reply he gave to the gentleman from

New York? Not one word of it! I heard it, and I marked it well, and upon it rests my eternal opposition to his election as Speaker. He replied that he was in favor of the restoration of the Missouri restriction: that if he had been in the last Congress, he would have been opposed to the Kansas-Nebraska bill: and that he was in favor of restoring the Missouri restriction, if it could be done: but as it could not be done, as a practical statesman, he was against all agitation. This may suit other gentlemen: it does not suit me. I want a man who coöperates with me to stand upon some principle upon which I can meet him.

The principles of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill are right, or they are wrong. If they are right, those of us who sustained that bill acted rightly. If they are wrong, we acted wrongly. If it was right to repeal the Missouri compromise, then that repeal should stand. If it was wrong, he is a coward who declares it wrong, and does not declare for restoring it. [Loud applause on the floor.]

Mr. Cox, (interrupting.) Will the gentleman allow me to ask him a question? [Loud cries of "Oh, no!"] The gentleman has stated the reasons why he cannot coöperate with those who are voting for Mr. FULLER. I would like him to tell me if there is no gentleman in the House who has heretofore agreed with him in sentiment as a Whig, for whom he could have voted for Speaker? and why it was that when my colleague from the Louisville district, [Mr. HUMPHREY MARSHALL,] who is not obnoxious to the charges he brings against Mr. FULLER, was voted for by the American party, he would not support him or some other gentleman of the American party?

The CLERK. The Clerk must remind the gentleman from Missouri that his time has expired.

[Loud and general cries of "Go on!"]

The CLERK. The gentleman can proceed if no objection be made.

No objection was made.

Mr. CARUTHERS, (resuming.) Well, sir, I might make several answers to the gentleman from Kentucky, who comes in sideways. [A laugh.] In the first place, I might say that his question has no relation whatever to the line of argument I was on when he interrupted me: but my respect and my unfeigned kindly feeling towards that gentleman induce me to answer him in a different way. He asks me if there is no Whig in all this House for whom I might have voted instead of for RICHARDSON. I understand him to arraign me for that vote. Sir, I will defend that vote—

Mr. Cox, (interrupting.) No, sir; you misunderstood me.

Mr. CARUTHERS. The gentleman asks me if there is no Whig for whom I might have voted. I tell him there is no Whig—none, sir. Mr. HUMPHREY MARSHALL, who was first voted for by the "South Americans," as they have been called, is no Whig. Do you tell me that a Know Nothing is a Whig? [Loud laughter, and much applause on the floor and in the galleries.] Why, sir, [turning to Mr. Cox,] the Philadelphia convention of last year, in their platform, which you have been swearing by ever since you have been a member of this Congress, declared that both the old parties—the Democratic and the Whig—were so corrupt, that such pure gentlemen as they were could

not act with them; and yet you arraign me as a Whig for not having voted for HUMPHREY MARSHALL, of Kentucky!

Mr. COX. No, sir: I did not arraign you at all.

Mr. CARUTHERS. Well, I understood you to say so, but I will take back the word "arraign."

Mr. COX. My remarks were not intended to arraign the gentleman's motives. I have no doubt in the world that a gentleman who is able to discover the front doors and the side doors by which gentlemen enter to ask a civil and respectful question here, will always so conduct himself as to have no difficulty upon the subject of arraignments before his country.

Mr. CARUTHERS. Does the gentleman want to make a speech, or to ask a question?

Mr. COX. I want to make a suggestion. You have plenty of time. The House has given you leave to go on.

Mr. CARUTHERS. Yes, and I thank the House for that.

Mr. COX. The gentleman says that there is no Whig upon this floor for whom he could vote; that that party is broken up; and that I have said so.

Mr. CARUTHERS. No, sir.

Mr. COX. I understood the gentleman to say that I had sworn that it was broken up, and that I could not coöperate with it. I will not go into a discussion of that subject; but I will ask the gentleman where the Whig party is? He professes to be a Whig, and yet is acting with the Democratic party, on the declaration that the Democratic party must succeed, or the country will go to ruin. That is the meaning of it; and he, professing to be a Whig, seems to be casting a reflection upon me because I professed there was no Whig party.

Mr. CARUTHERS. Not at all.

Mr. COX. I should like to know where the Whig party is. I want the gentleman to come to the point, and tell me where it is. My friend from Missouri has been a Whig all the time, and I want him to tell me, as he can, where the Whig party is in this House.

Mr. CARUTHERS. I was very unfortunate in my remarks, if I may judge of it by the manner in which the gentleman from Kentucky understood me. He asks me why it was that I, elected as a Whig, had voted for a Democratic candidate for Speaker upon the first ballot? In that connection, I understood him to ask me why I had not voted for his distinguished colleague. I reply to him that I could be under no obligation, as a Whig, to vote for his distinguished colleague, for he indorsed a platform which expressly repudiated not only the Democratic party, but the Whig party. I could be under no obligation to vote for him, as this American party was founded upon the ruin of both the others. The idea of the language, which I have not before me, is, that the party is established upon the corruption of both. [Laughter.] I am corrected, Mr. Clerk, by some gentleman near me. I am informed that the language is, that the American party was established upon the ruin of both the other parties, and both were ruined by their corruptions. [Laughter.]

Now to the question of the gentleman from Kentucky. [Mr. Cox.] He asks me how I, professing to be a Whig, could do so and so. There he

touches me. I have been a Whig from my boyhood: and I tell that gentleman that, when I first became an aspirant for political station in the district which I have the honor to represent, that district was Democratic by four thousand majority: and I tell him, as my people well know, that in all the contests in my district I never abated one particle of my Whig devotion; and I never went into the political field to engage in a fight but what I carried the Whig banner openly, and proclaimed my love for its principles. I came here, then, as a Whig.

The gentleman asks me where the Whig party is. I might tell him there was one Pythagoras, who entertained the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, and that when the Whig party died the soul of that party went into the present Democratic party. [Great laughter.] I saw during the last summer a great field of fight opened, and we were calm lookers-on. I looked over the whole field then for a Whig banner. I looked to gallant, glorious Tennessee. I saw no Whig banner there. In that canvass for Governor there was no Whig candidate—no man carrying the Whig colors. Casting my eyes from Tennessee, I looked over to the State from which the gentleman himself hails—to noble, revered Kentucky. What did I see there? The old banner under which I had rallied from the days of my childhood, and which had ever been borne aloft by her gallant son—where was it? It was trailing ingloriously. And when you had laid down that banner upon the grave of Clay, could I believe that the Whig party still existed? Sir, I did not believe it. If you could take down that banner, and fold it quietly over the grave of that immortal patriot and statesman—the first statesman of his times, the most eloquent man of any age, and the greatest party leader of all the world—and he could rest well under it, could I believe that the Whig party was still alive? Sir, do you believe it is dead?

Mr. COX. Does the gentleman desire an answer?

Mr. CARUTHERS. Certainly.

Mr. COX. The gentleman says that, when he took the stump in his district, he took it as a Whig, though there was a majority of four thousand Democrats against him; that he advocated Whig principles, and led his opponents over into his ranks.

Mr. CARUTHERS. I did not say I led them into the Whig ranks.

Mr. COX. But they voted for the gentleman proclaiming himself a Whig, and rallied under his banner as a Whig, and went with him into the Whig party, at any rate.

Mr. CARUTHERS. I protest, in all kindness, against any language being put into my mouth. I said that when I first became an aspirant for congressional honors there were four thousand majority against me. I said I never struck the Whig flag in my district.

Mr. COX. I understood the gentleman as I said.

Mr. CARUTHERS. If the gentleman pretends to say what I said, let him say what I did say.

Mr. COX. I said the majority had changed their position from the Democratic ranks, and had followed a Whig leader.

Mr. CARUTHERS. That is what you say. [Laughter.]

Mr. Cox. He says the Whig party is dead, and has gone back to the Democratic ranks. I understand he considers that the Whig party "marched up the hill, and then marched down again."

Mr. CARUTHERS. Mr. Clerk, if there be anything in this interruption, except so far as relates to my constituents, I should not, perhaps, devote any time to it. A few words, however, are due to my constituents, as well as to myself; for I do not wish to set myself up as an extraordinary champion, or grand leader, or anything of the kind. I think the House will bear me witness that, during the two years I have been a member of it, I have never spoken perhaps four times; never even called for the yeas and nays, [laughter;] never made a motion to adjourn. [Continued laughter.] They will bear me witness, I think, that I never showed any loud disposition to "get myself on the record;" for I thought that gentlemen would get more honor and more credit by keeping off the record, nine out of ten times, than they get by keeping on it. [Laughter.] I therefore claim no credit for any extraordinary modesty in that matter. It was on principle I acted.

But the point which I wish to reach is this: The gentleman from Kentucky [Mr. Cox] seemed to think that I must imagine myself an immortal leader, from the fact of my having started out, as I said I did start, against a majority of from three thousand five hundred to four thousand, and of my having overcome that majority without striking the banner of the Whig party. Well, the first time I came here I beat them, or else I would not have been here. [Laughter.] And I will tell you how I beat them, Mr. Clerk. There were three Democrats running. [Roars of laughter.] I am not very vain about that. But I have come here twice. Well, the fact of my coming here the second time was due—I believe in my heart—to this simple reason, that in the last Congress I had so reflected the will of my constituents, and had so borne myself on all those great measures in which they were interested, that they concluded in their hearts—and I say, from that spirit of frankness with which I am dealing in all this subject, that I believe they were right [roars of laughter]—they concluded in their hearts, I say, that there was no man in that district who could better reflect their will, and who would represent them more faithfully, than I. And so they ran only one man against me that time, and I beat him by two thousand five hundred votes; and the wonder has been to me ever since that I did not beat him by five thousand votes. [Renewed laughter.] Has the gentleman [Mr. Cox] any more questions to put to me? [Laughter.]

Mr. Clerk, I have been drawn into the most of this matter. I only rose to tell you—and to speak seriously upon that—why I have not voted for the distinguished gentleman from Pennsylvania, [Mr. FULLER.] But I was hurried up by this ten-minute rule; and as I had so very seldom appeared before the House, and did not know anything about the disposition of the gentlemen toward me, I did not suppose they would allow me to go on, as I saw they were disposed to crush down modest men; and so I hurried on. But here is what I want to say seriously in this connection: that if I said one word in explaining the reason why I did not and could not vote for Mr. FULLER, which could be at all disagreeable to the nicest sensibilities of that gentleman,

I wish now, without being called upon, to recall that word. I honor him for the position which he has taken, when he says here in his place that he would vote for the admission of States into this Union without regard to the fact of whether it was a slave State or a free. I honor him for that declaration. I tell him that, thus far, he is my political brother. When he preaches a sermon to these anti-Nebraska men, about whom we hear so much, and tells them that it is unpatriotic to continue this agitation, I give him the right hand of fellowship, and tell him that, there, too, he is my brother. But when he tells me that, if he could—that is, if the Senate and President were not against him—he would restore that Missouri restriction, I tell him that there we are at war—at a war to be without end. I vote for no man who is not content to leave all these questions of slavery on the great doctrine of non-intervention. I vote for no man, Mr. Clerk, who will not give to the people of the Territory—to the people to be affected by it—to the people who go from your States, where they have rights, into your Territories, where they lose none of those rights—the rights of self-government. I vote for no man who will not recognize in the government of the Territories the great doctrine on which your whole Government rests—the doctrine that the people are capable of self-government, and that the people are the best governors of themselves. Holding these doctrines, I could not vote for Mr. FREEMAN.

I will answer another branch of the question at another time, when I can do so without trespassing on the patience of the House. I will then explain why I have voted for Mr. RICHMONSON. And I now promise the gentleman who asked me that question, that, when I make that explanation, I will make it satisfactory even to him. I know that it will be fully satisfactory to those to whom I owe allegiance. I have no fears of that. I take no course which I cannot defend, or for which, in my own judgment and in my own heart, I have not a good defense. So I have no fears. And when I am taunted—as I have been taunted—that my course here will ruin me at home, I have only this to say—and I say it without boasting—I say it because it is true—that, so help me God, while I am a member of this House, I will speak no word, I will give no vote, in order to secure a reelection here—never! Pleasant as the gentlemen are who are around me, there is nothing in all the fascination of political life here which would make me sacrifice one portion of my duty to the people who have honored me by sending me here, much less is there anything in all this life which would make me sacrifice one portion of my self-respect. I prize highly—I prize as highly, perhaps, as any man does, or as any man should do—the approbation of my constituents; but I have this to say to them, that I am here as their agent, not as their slave; that I am here to vote according to my conscientious convictions of right, and that I will so give my votes; that whenever they are not satisfied with these votes they have an easy remedy. Let them just send some man here who will vote according to their notions of voting, and I can retire to my home; I can retire to my profession; I can retire to my family; I can retire without a murmur. But, sir, while I am their Representative I will be their Representative in fact and in deed. I shall vote what I choose to vote; I shall vote what I deem to be right and fit. I know my people better than others know them; and I

know they will indorse my vote—indorse, because they well know that I would not deal falsely with them. I forbear now to give the reasons why I have voted, and shall continue to vote, for Mr. RICHARDSON, but I expect to give them in due time.

[Cries of "Call the roll!"]

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